

In brief

THE HOSPICE ALTERNATIVE: A NEW CONTEXT FOR DEATH AND DYING, by Anne Munley. Basic Books, \$17.50, 349 pp.

If you or someone you love in the United States might be struck with a terminal disease in the next twenty years, this book deserves your attention.

Written by Sister Anne Munley, a trained sociologist gifted with range, common sense, and compassion, it studies the remarkable rise of the hospice movement in a medically hostile environment. (A dying patient nails down the problem: "Hospice cares for the patient for the patient's good. The hospital cares for the patient for the hospital's good.")

Hospice is an umbrella term for those groups and institutions offering service and support to the dying and their families. The goal is "to provide symptom control through appropriate palliative therapies," as well as to promote the physical, psychological, social,

and spiritual welfare of patients and their families. Services are provided by medically supervised interdisciplinary teams of professionals and volunteers. According to the National Hospice Organization, in 1982 there were over eight hundred hospice programs in the United States.

Through a series of moving interviews with patients, families, and care-givers, Sister Munley conveys the essence and tenor of hospice care. She handles all important issues with dexterity: the problem of the spiritual dimension in care for the dying, the contrast of hospice to hospital, the resistance of the health-care system to the hospice concept, and the economic precariousness of the hospice movement. On the latter, she notes the promising beachhead established by recent congressional legislation to initiate some funding of hospice care. Private insurance groups, reluctant to include hospice services in their present coverage, are watching to see the economic benefits of the government experiment.

Sister Munley concludes that "the

hospice must become an institutional component of the national health-care system." She depicts the hospice movement as an active reform-agent in the American medical system, but warns of the bureaucratic dangers the movement will face if integrated into the matrix system.

The book includes several helpful appendices (one on how to find hospice care) and a rich bibliography on all aspects of death and dying. A generous offering.

PATRICK JORDAN

Church/world watch

(Continued from page 681)

Nicaragua or in El Salvador, then Grenada will have long-term significance. Those of us with doubts about or decisive opposition to the Grenada action should understand where the focus of attention should be: establishing a barrier against future interventions, not winning the debate about the last one.

J. BRYAN HEHIR

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